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# 100. 100 Tips On How To Become A Motivational Speaker

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To celebrate the 100th episode of The Speaker Lab podcast, we decided to compile a list of 100 tips on how to become a motivational speaker (note: if you read 'motivational speaker' and immediately think of Matt Foley from SNL, just know these tips apply to all speakers. But how great was Chris Farley as that character? 😊)

55

Shares

31

17



*(**Note:** if you'd prefer to listen to my velvety pipes share these 100 tips with you through your ear buds, click the audio player above or download episode 100 of The Speaker Lab podcast in your podcast app of choice)*

This may be the largest collection of speaking tips on the internet.

We've broken these tips down into 11 different categories addressing all facets of speaking and running a business as a speaker. Feel free to skip around or just jump straight to the section you're most interested in (possible to link to a link that jumps to each section?)...



- 1: Preparing The Talk
- 2: Before You Go On Stage
- 3: Delivering The Talk
- 4: Connecting With Your Audience
- 5: Getting Speaking Gigs
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- 8: Building A Speaking Business
- 9: Growing Beyond The Stage
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- 11: Your Health

Free Bonus: Download a free PDF list of these 100 tips + links to all podcast episodes and resources mentioned.

Alright, let's jump in....

# PREPARING THE TALK

**1. Avoid powerpoint slides with heavy text** – Often times speakers want to have Powerpoint or Keynote slides to use as notes for their presentation. This is lazy. Don't do this. Any slides you use should be an enhancement not a replacement of your talk. If you're just going to stand up there and read off the screen, what does the audience need you for?

**Don't do  
what Bill  
does**



**2. Use powerpoint to show images that make a point** – Some speakers will build their talk around their slides. Start with the talk FIRST and then (and only then) determine if slides are needed or necessary. Generally, the most effective use of slides is for showing images or videos that can't be conveyed in words. For example, if you were in some death-defying crash and that's part of your talk, it's one thing to tell that story, but it's incredibly more powerful if you show pictures or video of it all.

**3. Write out your material** – Professional speakers don't just make stuff up. They don't write a few thoughts on a notecard and then shoot from the hip for an entire presentation. They take the time to write and carefully craft their material.

**4. Use humor** – You don't have to be a comedian to become a motivational speaker, but humor makes a massive difference. Humor works to endear you to an audience, but it's also a big differentiating factor in the speaking market. Many of the top speakers in the industry use humor in their talks. (for more on using humor when speaking, check out [this episode](#) and [this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast.)

**5. Tell stories** – Humans relate to stories. We connect to stories. Funny stories. Sad stories. Inspirational stories. We love stories. So tell them. Lots of them. Stories will keep your audience engaged and are also easier for you to memorize.

**6. Tell 1st person stories** – There's nothing wrong with telling a 3rd person story or using some case study or example. Telling stories that you lived and experienced generally makes the story better for you and the audience. For the audience, they can often times find themselves in your story. For you as the speaker, it's much easier (and more powerful) to tell a story that you lived versus one you read in a book.

**7. Learn from others but don't mimic** – You've probably watched a lot of speakers before haven't you? You've attended conferences, events, meetings or you've watched TED talks and YouTube videos of your favorite speakers. You know the things they do that work. It's easy to want to just duplicate what you saw them do since you know it works. But don't do that. Learn from *why* it worked and how you can incorporate a similar (but not copied) methodology into your own talks.

**8. Your best marketing is a great talk** – If you're a great marketer and are awesome at getting gigs, but you suck as a speaker, you won't last long. You can't build a business that way. Your marketing is telling people what to think about you until you show up and open your mouth. At that point, you have to deliver. Think about your favorite products and services that you recommend to others. Why do you recommend them? Not because they have the best marketing, but because the product or service is so dang good, you can't help but talk about it.

**9. Begin with the end in mind** – You ever get to the end of listening to someone else speak and you're left wondering, "what was the point of this talk?" Don't do that to your audience. When creating your talk, determine the destination that you want to take them to. Once you pick a point, then you can work backwards and reverse engineer how to get your audience to that place. (for more on developing your talk, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**10. It's not about you** – The more the audience feels like you're on stage just to brag or show how awesome you are, the more turned off they'll be. Your job is to encourage, motivate, challenge, and inspire them. Not to pat yourself on the back and manipulate them into giving you a standing ovation for your own ego's sake.

**11. Answer "now what?" for the audience** – Your audience is always asking two questions: so what and now what? So *what* means what does this have to do with me? *Now what* is what you want the audience to do as a result of your talk. Give them action steps to implement what you taught them. If they hear you speak but literally

don't do anything differently, what's the point?

**12. There is no “right” way to create a talk** – I prefer to manuscript my talks. I don't view them as a script to be memorized, but manuscripting helps me to think through the entire presentation and to know exactly how it all flows together. I know other speakers who prefer to have an outline with several bullet points and flesh it out from there. Every speaker is different. Find a process that works for you.

**13. Have your radar up** – Pay attention in everyday life. What makes you laugh? What makes you stop and question something? What makes you cry? What are the triggers that cause change in your own life? Many of the stories I tell are from everyday experiences in my life. Stories about going skydiving, taking my kids to Disney World, or losing my wedding ring on a canoe trip. When these stories happen, I look for ways to use them when I speak.

**14. Manuscript stories before you tell them** – If I told you to tell me the plot of your favorite movie, you could probably give me a good 60 second summary off the top of your head. But if you had a few hours to really think about it, and carefully craft that same synopsis, I bet you could tell it better. You would include more details and imagery. It would be more succinct and to the point. When you manuscript a story before you tell, it makes the story better.

**15. Create a rhythm to your talk** – Rhythm means creating a pace or flow to your talk that makes it easier to follow and navigate for the audience. I generally follow this rhythm when presenting: present a main point or idea...expand on that point....tell a story related to that



point...make application....wash, rinse, repeat.

**16. Open and close loops** – This tactic works well to keep the audience engaged. It's similar to the common speaking advice of "tell them what you're going to tell them," but sprinkle this throughout the talk. Opening a loop means raising a question in the audience's mind that makes them want to keep listening to hear the answer. For example..."in just a couple of minutes, I'm going to share with you the biggest mistake new speakers make on stage that you can avoid." I've just opened a loop. You want to keep listening because you want to know what the answer to the question is.

**17. Professionals have very few speeches** – One misconception is that the way you become a motivational speaker is you must have 94 different talks or presentations and they all must be amazing. This is not true. The best speakers on the planet only have one or two talks they do and those talks are insanely good. They don't have 94 different mediocre talks like amateurs. If you're going to do this long term, focus your talks down to just a few.

## 2) Before You Go On Stage

**18. Manage the nerves** – There's nothing wrong with feeling some nerves before you go speak. Those nerves are often confused with excitement. Having some of that excitement or nervous energy before you speak reminds you that what you're doing matters. It forces you to focus your attention and be fully present. One of the best ways to minimize those nerves is to practice so you know exactly where you're going with your talk. (for more on managing



nerves when you speak, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**19. Don't wing it** – The best motivational speakers on the planet don't just get on stage and open their mouth and see what comes out. They don't just shoot from the hip or make it up as they go. Nearly every word, every phrase, every pause, every audience interaction is carefully thought through and rehearsed. Amateurs wing it. Professionals put in the work. (for more on practicing and rehearsing, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**20. Look professional** – Before you open your mouth, the audience is making judgements and assumptions about you just based on how you look and dress. You may or may not like it, but we have to accept it's reality. Be professional in how you dress. Make an effort. Don't look like you just rolled out of bed. (for more on what to wear when you speak, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**21. Do a walkthrough ahead of time** – When you practice and rehearse your talk, do it like you would if you were actually presenting. If you are using props, include those in your rehearsal time. If you will be using a handheld microphone, practice by holding some type of object. Then do a walk through at the venue to get a feel for the stage, lighting, and where the audience will be seated. These walkthroughs ahead of time will give you more confidence when it's time to take the stage.

**22. Set yourself up for success** – There are a lot of variables that go into making a presentation good, so your job is to put as many of those variables in your favor as possible. Don't stay up late the night

before at some conference social party. Don't speak during a meal when servers are coming and going and dishes are clanking. Don't feel the need be "on" all the time at the conference. Stay in your room and relax a lot of the time. Because if all the variables are stacked against you but you crush your talk, it may still only feel like a C+ to the audience. You don't want the audience or event planner to say, "she was good, but she wasn't *that* good" because of factors working against you.

**23. Talk to the audience before you speak** – Before a talk, sometimes it helps to wander the room and meet a few people. It helps in a few ways. It helps you to get a vibe for the room and the energy of the group. Are they tired? Are they excited? Are they experts on this topic you'll be covering or are they complete newbies? You'll also connect with them on a 1-on-1 basis which helps both you and them. If before a session started, the speaker came up, shook your hand and had a meaningful 5 minute conversation, do you think you'd be more likely to pay attention to what they were saying? You bet you would. So it helps engage your audience, but it also helps you to better understand who is in your audience and how you can best serve them.

**24. Crowd density is a speaker's best friend** – The environment where you speak can be one of the biggest factors in how a presentation goes. Environment matters. A lot. The room where you speak can make a lukewarm audience an awesome crowd or a cranky crowd. You want the audience as close to the front and center as possible. Energy, laughter and engagement are all contagious. If you are speaking to a group of 50 people in a room that seats 800,

it'll feel empty and dead. The more dead space you have, the tougher the audience will be. Put this variable in your favor.

**25. Have a pre-game ritual** – A pre-game routine calms nerves and reduces stress. Make sure you arrive to the event in plenty of time so you're not rushed or stressed. Go over your talk one more time backstage. Check out the room and stage where you'll be speaking. Talk with the client and meet some of the audience members. Drink some water and stay off your feet. Relax. Enjoy the moment. Whatever you need to do before you speak that will help you to perform your best....do that.

**26. Check your fly** – Thankfully I've never made this mistake, but I've heard the horror stories. Right before you go out on stage, make sure to double and then triple check that everything is zipped up and put away.

**27. Join Toastmasters** – The way you become a better speaker is you speak. Reading this post will definitely help you, but it means nothing until you implement what you learn. Toastmasters is a huge international organization that gives you the opportunity to speak and get better. Check the [Toastmasters site](#) to find a chapter near you. (for more on the pros and cons of Toastmasters, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)



**28. Make a good speaker introduction** – Your introduction is an incredibly important part of your presentation. It's different than a bio you may have on your website. You want to create the introduction. Don't leave it up to the client. Your introduction should match the audience (the introduction I would use to speak to entrepreneurs would be different than the one I would use to speak to college students) and should set the tone for your talk before you even take the stage.

### 3) Delivering The Talk

**29. Stick to your allotted time** – Audiences, conference planners and other speakers HATE when speakers go over their time. If anything, end early, not late. Before you speak, you should time yourself so you know how long that talk could take. When you leave early, you leave

them wanting more. Five minutes can be the difference between “I would love to hear them speak some more” vs “their talk felt a little too long.”

**30. Don't be afraid of the silence** – The silence to a speaker can feel deafening but it can be powerful. Silence shows confidence that you're in control of the talk and the room and you're continuing to guide them towards a common purpose. When you make a strong point, don't rush to the next line. Stop and let it hang there. The silence is your friend.

**31. Stop apologizing** – The audience doesn't know what you don't tell them. Stop apologizing that you don't feel well. The audience doesn't care. They just want you to deliver a good talk. Stop apologizing that your allotted time got cut. The audience doesn't care. Stop apologizing that your slides aren't working. Just move on. There's a good chance the audience wouldn't have known you didn't feel well or that your time got cut or that the slides weren't working if you hadn't ever brought it up.

**32. Be willing to roll with it** – Be flexible as a speaker. Sometimes 5 minutes before you're supposed to speak, the event planner says instead of speaking 60 minutes, you need to be done in 45 minutes. I once spoke in a metal building during a hail storm. I spoke in a conference ballroom where the hotel power had gone out and it was pitch black, so everyone held up the flashlight on their phone so we had some light. I've had the fire alarm go off during a presentation. Things happen. Just roll with it. It makes for a good story or blog post later.

**33. Relax** – For some reason, there's this misconception that the audience is out to get you. Like they are rooting for you to fail. Nothing could be further from the truth. The audience wants you to do well. They don't want it to be a train wreck. If they're going to spend their precious time sitting in your session, they want it to be good. They're on your side. So relax. Take a deep breath and enjoy yourself.

Phil Davison Highlights

*And don't yell at your audience*

**34. Slow down** – When you are talking really fast, it becomes difficult for the audience to follow. It's hard to keep up and process. Plus the faster you talk, the harder it is to understand what you're saying. So slow down and enunciate. Give the audience the chance to keep up with where you're going.

Amazing Audience Talents!

*Sloooooowwww doooooowwwwnnnn*

**35. Pause** – Pausing is really hard for speakers because we hate the silence. A 3-second pause can feel like an eternity for a speaker. But that pause allows the audience to digest what you just said. If you barrel right into the next thought, they won't catch it because they are still trying to digest what you just said a minute ago. So take a deep breath and pause.

**36. Errors make you human** – Speakers worry sometimes, “what if I forget what I’m supposed to say next? What if my slides don’t work? What if I tell things out of order?” For one, most people never know. But two, when things go wrong or you have a brain fart, it makes you more relatable. If you are overly polished, you come across fake or even untrustworthy. Remember at the end of the day, you are just one human talking to a group of other humans. No need to pretend to be something you’re not.



**37. Be appropriate** – You don't need to be crude or inappropriate just for a laugh. It's not worth it. If you deliver a killer keynote and are flawless throughout, but you make one inappropriate remark, nobody will remember anything else you said. There's nothing wrong with using humor or making a strong point on something, but don't do it as the expense of crossing the line and turning people off.

**38. Allow the audience a chance to laugh** – When you tell a joke or deliver a punchline, give the audience time to laugh. Sometimes speakers like to rush to the next point, but don't do that. You need to give the audience a chance to respond to what you just said (in this case to laugh), but also if you rush on to the next though while the room is still laughing, nobody will hear what you're saying.

**39. When things go wrong, don't panic** – It happens. There's a million things that can go wrong and eventually some of them will happen to you. Recognize what you can and can't control. There will be times when the mic doesn't work and you have to switch mics or just speak really, really loudly. There will be times when the remote

for your slides stops working. There will be times it all seems to be going wrong, but don't panic. Those moments make you a better speaker.

A TED speaker's worst nightmare | Colin Robertson

*Stay calm*

**40. When possible, do Q&A** – In the right context (generally in smaller groups...less than 100), doing audience Q&A is extremely effective and powerful. You're able to answer their specific questions and not just what you think they want to hear. You're able to connect with people on a more personal level. You would usually do Q&A at the end of your talk and usually for around 15 minutes (depending on the setting). (for more on doing audience Q&A, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**41. There's no absolutes when speaking** – You don't have to do anything a certain way because so-and-so does it that way. You don't have to stand on stage. You don't have to use slides (I don't). You don't have to be a comedian. You don't have to use wild gestures or

movements. Your job is to be you and to deliver an insanely good talk. Do whatever you need to do on stage that will help you do those two things.

**42. Don't be a hero** – My speaker buddy **John Michael Morgan** said, “you don't have to be perfect because you're on stage. We need more humans.” Don't try to be something you're not. The more you go on about how amazing you are and all that you've done, the more turned off the audience will become. The audience wants to hear from another human that is genuine, authentic and vulnerable.

**43. On stage, be an amplified version of you** – The bigger the venue, the bigger you need to be on stage. The way you would communicate to a group of 10 people is very different than how you would need to communicate to a room of 10,000. Both should be an authentic version of you, but simply amplified to the setting. The bottom line is don't try to be something you're not on stage. Be you.

**44. Don't stand behind a lectern** – Lecterns are dumb. You don't need one. When you stand behind one, it literally puts a barrier between you and the audience. That's not good. Good speakers use the entire stage, so don't get trapped behind a lectern. If you need to have notes or notecards (most speakers don't need them), come back to the lectern from time to time to reference them, but don't get trapped behind it.

**45. When speaking, get out of your own head** – Speaking is like playing jazz. You don't have to give a talk the same way every time. You can improvise and mix it up sometimes. Some speakers get so deep in their own heads that they're not truly present with the

audience, but rather they're just regurgitating a script they memorized. You don't need to plan out every hand gesture or movement or exact line you'll use. Some of that is fine, but also be present enough with the audience that you can play jazz when the moment calls for it.

## 4) Connecting With Your Audience

**46. The audience takes their cues from you** – As the speaker, you set the tone for the audience. If you're excited, they'll be excited. If you're bummed out and clearly don't want to be there, don't be surprised if they feel the same. This also applies when things go wrong. If you come across as uptight, nervous or panicked, the audience feels that and it makes the entire room uncomfortable. But if you're calm, cool and collected, they'll feel the same.

**47. Stick around to meet audience members** – Often times, audience members will want to talk with you after you speak. They may have a question. They may want to share a story. Often times they'll just want to say thanks for your presentation. This is a fun part to speaking is meeting these people and interacting with them. As a speaker, you speak to a collection of individual humans, meaning even though there may be 500 people in the room, they all come in with different stories, struggles, doubts, fears, and insecurities. And to hear afterwards from those individuals how your talk impacted them in some way is extremely rewarding.

**48. Know your audience** – Not all audiences are created equal. They are each unique. Like a special snowflake. As a speaker, it's your

responsibility to learn about your audience and determine how to best apply your message to them. One size doesn't fit all when speaking. Even though 90% of your talk may work from one audience to the next, the more you know about your audience before a talk and the more you can customize it to fit their collective situation or circumstance, the better your talk will go and the more well received it will be.

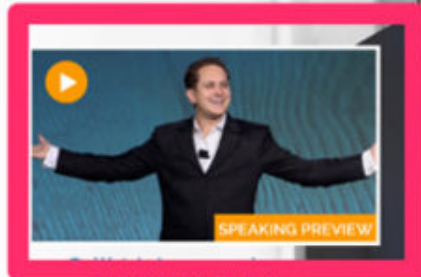
**49. Use a worksheet to keep the audience engaged** – If I'm doing a workshop or breakout session for a smaller group (usually under 100 people), often times I'll use a worksheet. As in old school fill-in-the-blank worksheet. It sounds cheesy but it can be extremely effective. It keeps the audience engaged because every few minutes, they have something new to write down. Plus you're able to put more information on the sheet such as links or resources, so they don't have to write those things down but rather can just focus on your presentation.

**50. Get the audience involved** – A good presentation should be a dialogue and not just a monologue. You may be the one with the mic, but it's your responsibility to get your audience involved. No matter how good of a speaker you are, the natural human tendency is to lose focus and stop paying attention. Audience involvement is often times a direct relation to how much trust you've earned with that audience. The more you build trust with them, the more you can ask them to do. Getting your audience involved could be asking for a show of hands, repeating after you, getting people to answer your questions, having the audience physically move or conducting small group discussions or interactions.

## 5) Getting Speaking Gigs

**51. Have a solid website** – If you don't have a website, you don't exist. A website is the most common way for clients to find and research you. And no, we're not talking about a Facebook page or a LinkedIn profile. An actual website on a domain you own. I recommend you use your name as the domain (i.e. GrantBaldwin.com), because as a speaker, you are the product. You are the brand. And please make sure your site looks sharp. Whether we like it or not, please judge books by their cover, so if your website looks like it was designed by your 2nd grade child, they'll assume you suck as a speaker. (for more on doing speaker websites, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

*Great example of a speaker website with demo video on homepage*



[on Millennials, Gen Y  
and generations](#)

• [Jason's TEDx talk on  
Gen Z: Generation  
after Millennials](#)

**Jason Dorsey solves tough  
generational challenges. He's  
received over 1,000 standing  
ovations. Adweek calls him a  
"research guru."**

And, yes, he Snapchats with his mom every day.

» [See what CEOs say about Jason Dorsey as a keynote speaker](#)

Jason Dorsey is not available through speaker bureaus.

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**52. Make a demo video** – If you want to get booked (and especially if you want to get paid), a demo video is a must. Think of a demo video like a movie trailer. It should be short enough to give people an overview but make them want to see more. If you post a video online of a 45-minute talk you gave, your mom will watch that 897235987 times, but no event planner will take the time to watch it. Good demo videos are usually between 2-4 minutes and just show the highlights of you speaking. (for more on demo videos, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)



## Grant Baldwin Speaker Demo Video

*My speaking demo video*

**53. Network with other speakers** – You should network with other speakers for two reasons. 1) Speaking is very lonely and isolating. Nobody outside of other speakers really understands this weird career path. So it helps to have others you can share the journey with. 2) Other speakers can be a great source of business. No one person can speak at every event. There's plenty of business to go around. Speakers are regularly asked for recommendations and referrals of other speakers for events. I've both given and received thousands of dollars worth of business from other speakers. (for more on doing audience Q&A, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**54. Pick a target market** – You can't speak to anyone. You may think your target market is humans, but that's a bad plan. If you think you can speak to anyone, you really can speak to no one. It doesn't mean that you can't speak in different markets, but focus on one specific audience in your marketing (especially if you're just getting started).

You may be able to speak to entrepreneurs and moms and dentists and cat lovers and moms of cat lovers, but if you try to communicate that on your website, nobody will book you. Pick an audience. The audience you want to speak to may change over time but start by picking an audience.

**55. Don't speak about everything** – If I were to ask you what you speak about, the worst possible answer is, “What do you want me to speak about? I can speak about anything!” (insert eye roll). No you can't. Just like you can't speak to anyone, you also can't speak about anything. While it may seem counterintuitive, often times, the more specific and focused you are in what you speak about, the more gigs you will get. Event planners often want specialists and not generalists who think they can speak about anything. (for more on determining what to speak about, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**56. Stop looking for an agent** – So many speakers don't want to do the hard work of looking for gigs and building relationships with decision makers, so you think you need an agent that will be a shortcut to the system. But you don't need an agent. You can find gigs on your own. Besides, legit speaker agents aren't interested in 99% of the speakers on the market. They work with the best of the best who are in-demand and charge high fees. (for more on speaker agents, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**57. Speaker bureaus aren't interested in you** – My friend Shawn Hanks who runs [Premiere Speakers Bureau](#) says, “Bureaus manage demand...they don't create it.” Meaning, if you're not already getting

lot of booking requests and inquiries, a bureau isn't going to magically create that for you. If you can't get a booking on your own, I promise that a bureau is not going to be interested in you. Plus, keep in mind that bureaus make their money off of commissions, so they generally only work with speakers in the upper levels of fees (\$10k+). (for more on speaker bureaus and how they work, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**58. Be clear on why you want to speak** – A lot of speakers enjoy this business because it's fun. We get to stand on stages and run our mouths. And while it is indeed fun, doing something purely because it's fun won't carry you through the times when it's just work. So why are you doing this? Really be clear on why you want to speak and how it fits into the bigger picture of your business. (for more on figuring out your why, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**59. Marketing never stops** – While it's true that the longer you speak, the easier it is to get gigs, the effort of finding and booking gigs will almost always remain. Even actors, musicians and celebrities have to work to maintain relevancy and to stay top of mind with people. As speakers, we're trying to do the same thing with audiences and event planners. It may get easier over time, but you will never get to a place where you can just coast.

**60. Collect testimonials** – Testimonials are incredibly valuable for speakers. They are the social proof that you are good at what you do. Ideally you want testimonials from event planners and decision makers so other future event planners and decision makers can feel

validated when hiring you. But you can also get testimonials from audience members. You can never have too many testimonials.

*The more testimonials the merrier (example from my buddy Scott Stratten's site – <http://www.unmarketing.com/speaking/>)*

#### Testimonials

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"Dear Scott: Wow! I have never had so many of my team members, send me emails and texts....thanking me for providing such as outstanding speaker, ever before! You most certainly, held our entire room in complete capture. It is very difficult to keep almost 400 realtors in complete silence.....but you did. They did not want to miss one word that you said. You had my entire group mesmerized.....including the wait staff that worked for the hall! Some our group this morning travelled 3 hours from our Muskoka area offices to hear you. No one was disappointed. I can honestly say, that you are "the best" keynote we have ever had. Myself, my management team and the entire sales and support staff thoroughly enjoyed your message and your humor. Thank you for helping us kick start 2015 off with a bang!

You will most definitely be asked to come back, again."

-Margie Spence, Royal LePage Niagara Real Estate Centre/In Touch Real Estate

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"I have been attending these conferences since 1980.....you were the BEST ever!" Jackie Collier, Executive Director



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"Scott spoke on the final day of our Annual Sales Meeting, in front of 1200 employees. We knew that the audience would be tired and less receptive than they were on day one! Scott's high energy and hilarious presentation was exactly what was needed – his unique brand of definitely relevant content and delightfully irreverent delivery resulted in the attendees highest feedback score for any presenter over the four-day period." Ian MacDonald – Senior Vice President – AutoTrader

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"For over an hour, Scott enlightened and entertained a very jaded group on the changing landscape of social media with insightful and humorous examples of brand initiatives. Of

**61. Don't depend on social media for gigs** – Nobody ever booked a gig because of a tweet. Or a cute Instagram picture. Or a Facebook post. Social media is good for building awareness and credibility, but don't assume that you posted that you're a speaker to your 46 followers and now the floodgates will open with booking requests. It doesn't work like that.

**62. Find the decision maker** – The bigger the event, the more people are often times involved in the decision making process. Sometimes

it's a committee but often times it's still an individual. Part of your role is to figure out who that person is and make sure you're communicating to them.

**63. Stay relevant** – Just because you've always done it that way doesn't mean that way will continue to work. Stay relevant in the examples and case studies you use from stage. Stay relevant in the topics that you speak on. Stay relevant in what's happening in your industry. Stay relevant in the platforms you use (social media and otherwise) to communicate to your audience and potential clients.

Free Bonus: [Download a free PDF list of these 100 tips + links to all podcast episodes and resources mentioned.](#)

## 6) Fees

**64. Have a fee structure** – A fee structure gives a client options. Generally offer 3 different options. You want just one keynote? It's \$X. You want a keynote and two workshops? It's \$XY. You want a keynote + two workshops + 100 books? It's \$XYZ. It's the same reason fast food chains offer you "value meals" or you can buy ala carte. Every event planner has different needs and a different budget, so offer them options. (for more on speaking fees, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

## SPEAKING FEE:

- \$12,500 + travel expenses for keynotes and up to 90-minute presentations.
- \$15,000 + travel expenses for up to 1/2-day workshops.
- Call to discuss full and multiple day fees.

*Fee structure example from [John Jantsch](#)*

**65. Do all inclusive pricing** – There's two ways to price travel... separately or all-inclusive. We've done both and recommend all-inclusive. It's easier for you the speaker, and there's no surprises for the clients. It's just generally simpler for everyone. (for more on fees and travel, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**66. Be confident in the value you offer** – At any stage of your speaking career, it may feel strange at times to charge anything, let alone thousands of dollars to do something you love like speaking. But remember you're not being paid for that one hour you're on stage. You're being paid for the thousands of hours you've practiced, researched, worked, learned, spoke at other events, etc, so by the time you show up to speak at their event, you are providing massive amounts of value for that client and their event.

**67. Negotiate based on value** – Don't be a speaker who just flippantly discounts for no reason other than you just want the gig. If you're going to reduce your fee for some reason, find value that you can get in return. Maybe that client can introduce you to 5 other potential clients. Maybe they can provide a provide extra nights at the hotel for you or your family (if the event is in a cool place :). Maybe they can provide footage of your talk that you can use for a

demo video. If you're going to reduce your fee for that client, make sure you're still getting something in return.

## 7) The Client

**68. Do a pre-event call** – Usually 2-3 weeks before an event, we'll have a pre-event call with that client. Remember that many events are booked 6-12 months out (and some more than that), so there's a good chance everyone forgot what was discussed in the interim when something was booked and when the actual event takes place. This pre-event call allows you the speaker to walk through the event schedule and details with the client to make sure everyone's on the same page and there's no surprises. It also allows you to learn more about the event and the audience, so you can customize your material accordingly.

**69. Ask for referrals from clients** – One of the best leads is one that comes from a referral. Whenever you speak somewhere, always ask the client if there are other event planners they know of that would be interested in what it is you do. If so, and assuming you did a good job, ask for an introduction or referral. A key component though is you have to do a great job. Even if the client likes you, they won't recommend a speaker that did a poor job. (for more on getting referrals, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**70. Show appreciation for the client** – Before the event, share your excitement with the client about the opportunity to be part of their event. While on-site, compliment the quality of the event and how things are running (be genuine). After the event, I give clients a



handwritten thank you card from me. My assistant sends a thank you card. We send thank you emails to everyone involved in the event that we worked with. We also send a small gift. Be grateful for the opportunity you were given.

**71. Serve** – When you're at the event, don't have this celebrity mentality that you're better than everyone else. By all means, guard your time and don't allow clients to walk all over you, but have a mentality that you're there to serve the client and the audience. I heard a quote one time that said, "Business is like tennis. Those who serve well, win."

**72. Be just as good off stage as you are on** – If you're amazing on stage, but you're a pain in the butt or a jerk off stage, you won't get booked. I've heard numerous stories of speakers that were phenomenal on stage but because of who they were off stage, nobody wants to work with them. Don't be that speaker.

**73. Never embarrass the client** – Never say anything on or off stage that would embarrass a client. You are there as a representation of that company or group, so never do anything that would make them look bad. Remember that clients talk, so if you do something stupid from stage, expect word to spread quickly that you are to be avoided as a speaker.

**74. Thank the tech crew** – The tech crews for conferences and events have worked with hundreds of speakers and have seen plenty of divas and prima donnas. Don't be that speaker. They have the ability to make you look and sound better than you really are. Be kind and courteous to them. Show appreciation and gratitude for the work

they do behind the scenes that makes your job easier (and better). (for more on working with AV crews, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

## 8) Building A Speaking Business

**75. Have a long term perspective** – Becoming a top notch speaker is not an overnight thing. It takes years and years to become an overnight success. So if you don't get that gig this year, it's not the end of the world. They are most likely having the same event next year, and they'll need a new speaker then. Focus on relationships not gigs.

**76. Join the NSA** – [The National Speakers Association](#) is a collection of speakers who are helping one another build their business. They have many local chapters that meet regularly as well as various national conferences you can attend. NSA is great for networking with other speakers and also gives you the opportunity to rub shoulders with and learn from some of the best in the business. (for more on the NSA, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast )



**77. Take your business seriously** – If you treat speaking as a hobby, don't be surprised when you get hobby-like results. You're running a business, so treat it accordingly. Have systems and processes for how you do things. Be professional. Respond in a timely manner to requests and inquiries. If you're not going to take your business seriously, why should anyone else, especially potential clients?

**78. Build relationships with clients** – My favorite clients are those I also consider friends. We exchange Christmas cards. We text. We keep up on what's happening in each other's lives. At the end of the day, people do business with people they know, like and trust. So don't just fly in, collect a check and fly out. Work to build a meaningful, long term relationship so that clients want to bring you back multiple times over the years as well as refer you to their colleagues and peers.

**79. Stop looking for a shortcut** – Building a speaking business takes time. This is not an overnight thing. The best speakers on the planet and who have had the most successful careers didn't get lucky. They didn't find a magical shortcut that is hidden from you. They worked their butt off on their craft and their business. There's no shortcut here. Just do the work.

**80. Create systems** – Having systems in place removes the guesswork. It create a logical flow and pattern to how you do things. Systems make your life simpler because you don't have to think or reinvent the wheel every time. But systems also make your client's life simpler because you're easier to work with and have your crap together.

**81. Hire to focus on only what you can do** – As the speaker in your business, only you can speak. But you don't necessarily have to be the one to book travel, create contracts and invoices, follow up with clients and make sure you get paid. As your business grows, so will the moving pieces in your business. Determine what only you can do and where you're at your best and hire to fill the other roles. (for more hiring, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**82. Invest in yourself and your business** – I've invested tens of thousands of dollars in myself and my business over the years. Investing in coaches, training, conferences, mentorship, etc is the ultimate fast pass to the front of the line. Sure you could stumble around the internet trying to cobble together some free resources on a topic and hypothetically save yourself a few bucks (but potentially waste a lot of time) or you could invest in yourself and get quality

advice from an expert who will save you the time and cut your learning curve significantly.

**83. Always have a written agreement** – When you get booked, always have a written agreement. It's crazy but people have fuzzy memories when money is involved. Write everything down. I had a speaking mentor early on who told me, "a paper trail is a safe trail. If you didn't get it in writing, it didn't happen." (for more on speaker agreements, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

## 9) Growing Beyond The Stage

**84. Develop ways to build your business and serve beyond the stage** – Speaking is extremely powerful, but it certainly has its limitations. Think of the last speaker you heard. How much of their talk do you even remember? Probably a very small percentage. So how can you help your audience learn and retain your content AFTER you leave the stage?

**85. Write a book** – While I don't think you must have a book in order to get speaking gigs, it certainly doesn't hurt. If you're going to write a book, I generally recommend you self-publish. First, traditional publishers (like speaker bureaus) most likely aren't going to be interested in you. Second, when you self-publish, you control the process and get to make the decisions (title, layout, editing, etc). It's may be more work at times, but you also make more as well. If you go this route though, my biggest advice would be that your self published book shouldn't look self-published. People judge books by their covers, so spend the time (and money) to make it look sharp

and like it belongs on the shelves of a local bookstore. (for more on writing a book, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**86. Diversify with multiple streams of revenue** – It's never smart to have all your eggs in one basket. Sure, there's nothing wrong with speaking being the primary bread and butter, but you better think about what would happen if you suddenly couldn't speak. What if a medical issue knocked you out for several weeks or months? What if the economy got hammered again and speaking gigs started drying up? Make sure you have options beyond just speaking.

**87. Develop revenue sources that don't require you to leave home** – The challenge with speaking is it doesn't scale. The nature of the profession is you generally have to get on a plane and leave home. The problem is that you become the bottleneck. If you're not traveling/speaking, you're not generating revenue. And worst case scenario, if something were to happen to you or you simply wanted to take some time off, your income would suffer. Whether it's a product (book, curriculum, online course, etc) or service (coaching, consulting, referrals, sponsorships, etc), find revenue sources that don't depend on you getting on a plane.

## 10) The Travel

**88. Be a loyal traveler** – When traveling, status does matter. Status leads to free checked luggage, complimentary upgrades to first class, and maybe the most important but overlooked perk...priority flight changes. More and more airlines don't allow you to go standby for a flight (for free) unless you have status. When a flight is



canceled and everyone needs to be re-booked on something else, guess who goes to the top of the priority list? Those with status. Having status has saved my butt on numerous occasions to make it to an event and also has got me home faster because I could go standby on flights home.

**89. Don't book the last flight to an event** – If you have the last flight to an event and something goes wrong, you're screwed. You never want to leave yourself in a spot where you have no other options. Always leave yourself some wiggle room in your travel plans, so you can ensure you're able to get to the event in plenty of time. (for more on travel tips for speakers, [check out this episode](#) and [this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**90. Do what's best for the client** – As I said above, I'm a loyal traveler, however if the client is paying for the airfare, and I have the choice between a lower cost flight on one airline compared to a significantly higher priced ticket on my preferred airline, I will do what's best for the client. You may be great on stage as a speaker, but if your travel expenses were too high in the opinion of the client, unfortunately, that's what they'll remember.

**91. Always have a plan B** – When traveling, always be thinking one step ahead of what your plan B might be. If you see that you might miss a connection, figure out your other options. If it looks like there's a storm moving into the area that could cause delays or flight cancelations, start figuring out what else you could do. Figure out your plan B before you need it. That takes a lot of unneeded pressure and stress off you when things inevitably do come up.



**92. Never miss an event** – I've rented a car and driven through the night multiple times. I've taken a redeye and brushed my teeth in the parking lot of a venue before. I've felt sick and exhausted on stage several times. But thankfully, I've never missed an event (knock on wood). There may be things that are way outside of your control when traveling, but if you miss an event, you need to know that you at least did everything you possibly could to get to that event. Your effort (or lack thereof) will speak volumes to the client.

## 11) Your Health

**93. Don't let being a speaker get in the way of being a human** – One of my favorite sayings is 'who you are is more important than what you do.' Being if you're a great speaker and you make a difference for everyone else but you drop the ball as a husband, wife, mother, father, friend, or you're just a shell of a human being...that's not worth it. Nothing wrong with being a speaker that makes a difference, but don't let that get in the way of you just being a human.

**94. Take care of your health** – Traveling and speaking is much more tiring and draining than people may realize. When you travel/speak, you get out of your normal routine of life and as a result, your hopefully normal, quality health habits can tend to go out the window. Make sure that while you're away, you continue to eat well, get enough sleep and exercise. You know, all the same stuff your mom would tell you to do.

**95. Stay hydrated** – A simple and commonly overlooked health secret of speakers is we drink a ton of water. Staying hydrated helps

keep you healthy when you travel. It also keeps your throat from drying out when you speak. Personally, I prefer room temperature water. Ice cold water can hurt your vocal chords.

**96. Stay grateful and humble** – As a speaker, you get to do something very few people do. You get paid (often times extremely well) to travel, stand on stages, share your message, and make a difference in the world. There's not many people who get to experience that. And sure, there are certainly non-glamorous and non-sexy parts of the job (like any job), but always be extremely grateful and humble for the opportunity you've been given to speak and impact lives.

**97. Stay connected back home** – When I travel, I text, call and FaceTime my wife and daughters constantly. I want to keep them updated on where I am and what I'm doing, and I want to stay connected with what they're doing back home. Far too many speakers end up with broken marriages and become absentee parents by the nature of the job. Don't let that happen to you. Work extra hard to maintain the relationships with those you love most even when you're away from home. (for more on staying connected while on the road, [check out this episode](#) of The Speaker Lab podcast)

**98. When you're offstage, be off the stage** – My buddy Scott McKain makes this great point [in this post](#). You don't need to be on all the time. You don't need to be the life of the party. Being "on" all the time is not only fake to who you really are, but it's exhausting. Don't do that.

**99. Have boundaries** – When speaking at an event, don't feel pressured to go to every single function offered. The primary role you were hired for was to speak, not to attend some social happy hour. It's helpful to pop in to those from time to time to make an appearance, connect with attendees, and make the client happy, but have boundaries. I'm naturally pretty introverted (and I find most speakers I know are too), so I tend to spend a lot of time in my room. Not just because I'm slightly anti-social at times, but because I want to be fully rested and ready and not exhausted and drained when it's time to speak.

**100. Have fun** – You have a great gig. You get to travel and speak and change the world. Enjoy that. Savor the moments. Be fully present when people are sharing their story. Give lots of hugs and high fives. Show gratitude and appreciation for others. Enjoy the journey.

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Whew...

That was a lot.

Any speaking tips that I missed?

Or maybe you have a question about one of the tips above.

Either way, let me know by leaving a comment below right now.

2 Comments

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Name

**Peterson Walube**

2 months ago



WOW!!!! Thank you so much but just one question, what do you think about the dressing of the speaker?

Peterson Walube

^ ▾ Reply

**Grant Baldwin** ➔ Peterson Walube

2 months ago



Here's a podcast episode we did on the topic - <https://thespeakerlab.com/d...>

3 ^ ▾ Reply

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